

**CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)**  
**OPENING STATEMENT FOR INNOVATION MARK-UP**  
**June 7, 2006**

I want to welcome everyone here for this mark-up on three important and bipartisan bills. I'm going to make all my general comments on today's bills now and not speak on the bills later, since we have to squeeze in a lot of business this afternoon between floor votes.

As usual with this Committee, these bills reflect a lot of bipartisan work to solve real problems in practical ways.

Our first bill today will be a measure to improve drought forecasting and monitoring, introduced by Mr. Hall. I appreciate Mr. Hall bringing this matter to our attention.

Drought may seem like something that is easy to detect but hard to do anything about. But that turns out to be wrong on both counts. It's tricky to figure out when a drought is developing, but if one knows, one can take many steps to alter water usage to mitigate drought's often severe economic consequences. So we need to pay more attention to this costly phenomenon, and Mr. Hall's bill, building on existing federal efforts, will enable us to improve drought forecasting and monitoring, which will save billions of dollars. So I expect this bill to move smoothly today and on the House floor.

We will have one manager's amendment today to reduce the authorization levels to make that progress to the floor a little easier.

The other two bills we will take up today are the Committee's long awaited innovation package.

Our goal here is to take action on the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences, the Council on Competitiveness, AeA, the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers and others who have been calling for the U.S. to shore up its competitiveness by focusing more attention and more dollars on research and education.

These calls were really music to our ears because we've been issuing the same entreaties ourselves for years, and especially in the last couple of years as the challenge to future U.S. competitiveness has become ever clearer.

But we didn't want to answer these calls with a laundry list of new programs of dubious value that would be unlikely to ever get funded. Instead, we looked around to see what is working right now or what has worked in the recent past, and then we extended or expanded or built on those successful programs. And the result is a focused, bipartisan measure that should be able to move swiftly through the House.

This measure is an intelligent middle-ground between those who want to create scores of new, untested, expensive programs and those who argue that all that's necessary is to increase overall funding for basic research and leave everything else to chance. If we are to remain competitive, then we have to bolster key programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF), especially programs focused on K-12 and undergraduate education, and it's the prerogative of the Congress to do that.

I want to thank Mr. Schwarz and Mr. McCaul, two active freshmen on this Committee with a deep understanding of these issues, for introducing these bills.

And I want to thank Mr. Gordon and the Members on both sides of the aisle who worked with us on developing the final versions of these bills that are in the amendments in the nature of a substitute, including Mr. Ehlers, Mrs. Biggert, Mr. Calvert, Ms. Jackson-Lee, Mr. Green and Mr. Honda.

The Schwarz bill focuses on education programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF), which runs programs that are critical to improving math and science education at all levels. The bill includes enhancing and extending the Noyce Scholarship program, one of my pet projects, to attract and train better science and math teachers. We also give renewed emphasis to the Math and Science Partnership program, now renamed the School and University Partnership Program.

And we underscore NSF's role in the sometimes neglected, but critical area of undergraduate education. We also give clear authority to the Department of Energy (DOE) for education programs, and we require an inventory and evaluation of those programs.

In Mr. McCaul's bill, we bolster research by ensuring that both NSF and DOE we will set aside funding for young researchers, who are likely to perform the most creative and pathbreaking work. And we revive an idea from the 1980s to try to get industry interested in these young academic researchers and in their long-term, basic research.

I would add that both these bills, and the underlying 2002 NSF Act, direct that the programs in these bills, among other things, help bring more individuals from underrepresented into science, math and engineering.

So we're taking action today as we promised when we heard from the leaders of the National Academy's *Gathering Storm* panel last year. We are setting a realistic agenda to increase U.S. investment in research and education in carefully targeted ways.

I look forward to moving this legislation today, and to continuing efforts to see it signed into law this year. And I will continue to work with the appropriators to see that they provide the funding called for in the American Competitiveness Initiative and in these bills.

Mr. Gordon.

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